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AGAR

Rollin J. Wells



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H A G A R.



HAGAR.

Wait, darling, for a while, then drink again.
(See page 76.)

HAGAR

A DRAMATIC POEM IN THREE ACTS

BY ROLLIN J. WELLS

Illustrated by WILLIAM L. HUDSON

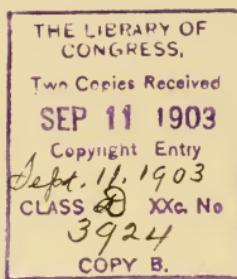


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DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

HAGAR.

ATHURIEL, *her lover.*

ABNER, *her father.*

ABRAHAM.

SARAH, *his wife.*

ISHMAEL, *son of Abraham and Hagar.*

Og.

BASIL.

A Priest.

RHODA, *a servant of Abraham.*

A Captain, her husband.

ESTHER and REBECCA, *maids of Sarah.*

Soldiers, servants, messengers and guards.

Dancing maidens.

TO HER WHO GAVE ME BEING;
WHO CAUGHT THE FIRST LISP OF MY TONGUE;
WHO LED MY TOTTERING FEET;
WHO BORE WITH MY INFIRMITIES;
WHO SLEEPS BESIDE THE FATHER OF WATERS,
THIS VOLUME IS
AFFECTIONATELY AND REVERENTIALLY DEDICATED.

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HAGAR.

Ah, beauteous bird, unfold your wings and give
The message unto me.

H A G A R .

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Sacred Grove and Oriental Garden.* HAGAR in the garden with a homing dove. She unfolds its wings and finds a message which she takes and reads.

HAGAR.

Ah, beauteous bird, unfold your wings and give
The message unto me. Athuriel!
How my heart quickens at that name! Oh, joy!
I hear it in the soft hush of the night,
And day is ushered in with that sweet word.
The bird proclaims it in the morning mist,
And droning bees hum it unto the flower.
Take unto him this rose; it will convey
A meaning deeper than words can impart.
Spread, spread your wings until you rest
Within his arms.

(Enter ABRAHAM and SARAH. HAGAR withdraws unobserved by them.)

ABRAHAM.

The promise that was made long years ago
Awaits fulfillment. We, like trees with leaves
Loosed by the frost, stand waiting for the change
We know must come.

SARAH.

Have faith, wait on the Lord.

ABRAHAM.

Faith is the substance of things unseen,
The stuff of which our dreams are made, and
dreams
Are rainless clouds that tempt the thirsty earth.
But give no life. Man must put forth his hand
To answer his own prayers.

SARAH.

Was it not faith
That led you from the land where dwell our kin?
That made us wanderers with no abode?

If, now the Lord fulfills His promise, well.
If not, be still and wait. He has bestowed
Rich gifts in flocks and herds and gold.

(Exit SARAH.)

ABRAHAM.

My hand
Has wrought in this. Our deeds must supple-
ment
Our prayers.

(Enter PRIEST.)

ABRAHAM.

Hail!

PRIEST.

Hail! Most faithful Abraham! What brings
You here?

ABRAHAM.

To gain assurance for my faith,
Which leans too heavily upon my sense.

PRIEST.

Doubt you the promise made?

ABRAHAM.

I doubt, then chide
My doubts and doubt again.

PRIEST.

Mountains of mist
That block your way with incorporeal fears,
And yet they hide the face of God.

ABRAHAM.

True, true,

But when I count the passing years and see
 The luster fading from my Sarah's eyes,
 I cannot down the doubts that come in troops
 As deadly plotting traitors.

PRIEST.

Such they are,

And can o'erturn the will of God. He gave
 The promise of a son, but did not hedge
 The way. Unto His image, man, he gives
 A wide discretion to work out His plans.
 Another vessel may be chosen of Him.

ABRAHAM.

Instead of me?

PRIEST.

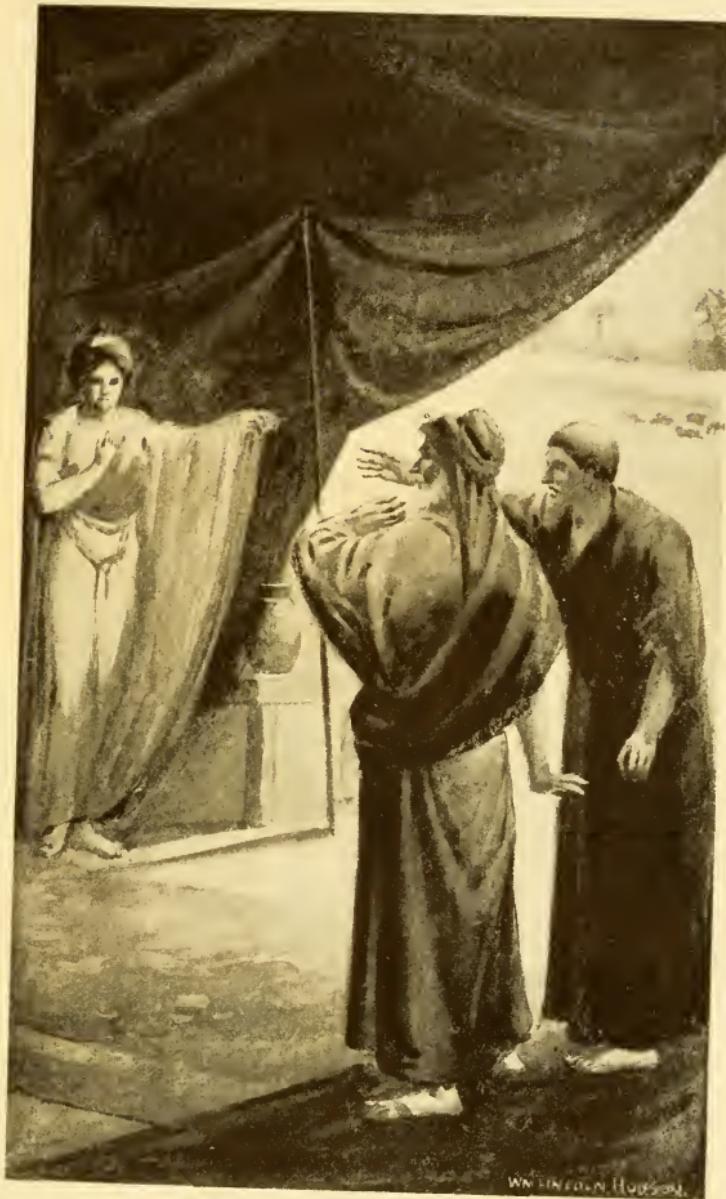
Sarah.

ABRAHAM.

How may I know?

PRIEST.

Age bars her right to even expectation,
 While passion smolders in your breast.



WM. E. H. HUDSON.

ABRAHAM,

I would hear

The voice, or see the vision with mine eyes.

ABRAHAM.

Nay, nay,
My blood is growing chill with age.

PRIEST.

And so
You doubt the voice from Heaven that speaks
to me
Within the sanctuary?

ABRAHAM.

I would hear
The voice, or see the vision with mine eyes.

PRIEST.

Behold the chosen of the Lord!

(*A vision of HAGAR is made to appear. ABRAHAM looks, is transfixed, lifts his hands, turns to the PRIEST, and looks again at the vision of HAGAR.*)

Recall this vision with your inner eyes,
Nor doubt.

ABRAHAM.

With such a dower of loveliness
I cannot doubt. Who is her sire?

PRIEST.

Abner.

Remember, this is prize not lightly given.
Tithes, ample tithes, must be forthcoming.

ABRAHAM.

Yea.

PRIEST.

The half of all you have were none too much!

ABRAHAM.

The half of all I have! 'Tis even so.

PRIEST.

Now make this plain to Sarah.

ABRAHAM.

Ah, I fear.

PRIEST.

The vision?

ABRAHAM.

No.

(Exit ABRAHAM.)

(Enter ABNER, the father of HAGAR.)

PRIEST.

You know the Patriarch, Abraham?

ABNER.

I do.

PRIEST.

He's father of a race.

ABNER.

What race?

PRIEST.

That is to be.

ABNER.

He's old, so is his wife.

PRIEST.

But he

Has gold, and flocks and herds that fill the plains.

ABNER.

And crowd the other fellows to the hills.

PRIEST.

And he would take your daughter, and from her
Raise up a son.

Hagar.

ABNER.

She has a lover now.

PRIEST.

Some stripling without beard, and empty purse.

ABNER.

An eagle that hangs o'er the cliffs and falls
From cloudless sky upon the enemy.

PRIEST.

Has he a dower?

ABNER.

Of soldiers, enemies,
And expectations.

PRIEST.

Stuff on which to feed
Your age!

ABNER.

Well, what would Abraham give?

PRIEST.

But name
Your sum, and do not overlook the priest.

ABNER.

Beauty and youth come high. Moreover tears
Will flow, and these cannot be cheaply dried.

Her lover's lance will find the armor's joint
Unless he's roundly paid. 'Twill take a sum—
A princely sum!

PRIEST.

Then let it be so named!
A royal sum! for Abraham has flocks,
Desires and faith, and will fetch forth the bond.
Inform your daughter how the matter stands,
And I will unto Abraham, and get
The bond.

(Exit PRIEST.)

ABNER.

A cunning priest! But he can work
On Abraham, if not on me.

(Enter HAGAR.)

My child!

HAGAR.

What is it, father?

ABNER.

I but said "my child."

HAGAR.

What trouble stirs the passion in your voice?

ABNER.

Not trouble, but good fortune seeks our door
 This day, and, as the saw says, "Knocks but
 once."

Shall we let it go by?

HAGAR.

If it alights

Within our gate, hold fast on it, for your
 Declining strength needs sure support.

ABNER.

Happy

The sire who sees his children thus give heed
 Unto his needs.

HAGAR.

Who brings unto our door
 This blessing?

ABNER.

'Twas a messenger from God.

HAGAR.

Tell me his name.

ABNER.

The priest!

HAGAR.

How strange
That he should come with blessings to our door!

ABNER.

The ways of God are strange to men, but He
Makes known His wishes through His priests.

HAGAR.

Would He
Not speak to you or me?

ABNER.

No, child.

HAGAR.

How may
We know He speaks to them?

ABNER.

Does He not speak
In wind and flame? and touch the mountains till
They smoke, and drag the victim to the pyre?
Bow down in fear before His priest and yield
To His command. Now Abraham the sheik
Seeks to divide with us his flocks and gold.

HAGAR.

Why should he do all this?

ABNER.

For you, my child.

HAGAR.

For me? For me? What said my sire?

ABNER.

I said

“My child.”

HAGAR.

Am I put up for paltry gold?

ABNER.

Think of his flocks, his gold, his goodly name.

HAGAR.

I will not think of it. My heart shall keep
Its promise to Athuriel till death.

ABNER.

Be not ungrateful for the nurturing years,
Nor head-strong in your waywardness.

HAGAR.

I'm not
Unmindful, nor ungrateful, but my blood
Cannot be coined in gold. In all things else
I will obey, but not in this. My soul
Abhors the loathsome thought!

ABNER.

'Tis my command!

Obey!

HAGAR.

Nay, I will die.

ABNER.

Yes, die, and walk
This earth a naked soul, blasted by winds
That blow from hell's hot flames, shut out from
God,

Whose hand is laid on you. Go to the priest,
And he will lead you unto Abraham
And save your soul.

(*Exit ABNER. HAGAR casts herself on a seat and rests upon a table. The light fades; she sobs herself to sleep. Darkness follows and then it grows lighter, and ATHURIEL enters, and, seeing HAGAR, speaks in soliloquy.*)

ATHURIEL.

Asleep amid the flowers, where angels flit
 And waft sweet dreams, as odors, from their
 wings.

The benediction of the skies must rest
 Upon this scene, and earth smile back to Heaven.
 O, let me be a portion of thy dream!

(He draws nearer.)

Awake, my love! The Shepherd of the night
 Leads to the fold the waning stars, and day,
 With rising splendor, floods the hills.
 Come, while the shadow rests upon the flower,
 Pensive with dewy tears.

HAGAR.

My heart awoke
 Before the young winds breathed into my ear
 Your prayer, but, with a fainting hope, for life
 Has lost its sweetness.

ATHURIEL.

Speak not so, my love.
 What evil wind now wakes, robbing my rose
 Of its sweet-scented dew?

HAGAR.

Plucked by rude hands,
 Its fragrance ravished by a ruder breath,

Hagar.

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ATHURIEL.

Who lays restraint on you?

HAGAR.

The priest.

ATHURIEL.

Comes he betwixt our lives?

HAGAR.

The priest, the law,
My father's will.

ATHURIEL.

Does he forbid our troth?

HAGAR.

He does.

ATHURIEL.

Resist the father's will.

HAGAR.

But God
Commands submission, saith the holy priest.

ATHURIEL.

'Tis Abraham, with flocks and herds, who steals
My one ewe lamb.

HAGAR.

It is the law.

ATHURIEL.

The law!

'Tis lust that lays its leprous hands on you.

HAGAR.

My father's will. From it I cannot fly.
Come, fly with me to death!

ATHURIEL.

Come, live with me!

List to the untaught bird! E'en now he mounts
Into the dewy air, telling his love
In joyous strain. None bids him nay. Thus
would

I sing my love to you. Come, let this be
Our wedding day.

HAGAR.

Entreat no more, my love!

At times the fire raging in my heart
Burns up my resolution, and the blood
Runs riot in my breast. I would defy
The world! And then my passion's quenched in
tears.

Would, would that I could die!

ATHURIEL.

Hear me, dear heart,
And live, for God has filled our lives with love,
And led us as two rills that, singing, meet,
Mingling their waters in one affluent stream
That seeks the ocean of His love. Obey
Your heart; resist the father's wish and wrath.

HAGAR.

My life is in his hands. My naked soul
Would fly and find no place of rest.

ATHURIEL.

But that

He cannot bind.

HAGAR.

Yet God commands, so saith
His holy priest.

ATHURIEL.

I dare rebel against
Such law as this. God speaks to every one,
Entwines our lives around His own. No need
Of priest to crush the tendrils of the soul.

HAGAR.

Speak not in blasphemy. The priest proclaims
The law. God talks with him.

ATHURIEL.

God made your soul,
E'en as the sun shakes from his shining rim
The golden sphere. This angels may not dim.
Could He imbrute it with a sinful thought?
Deface His image and put out its light?

HAGAR.

Love crucified by law lives on, yet dies
Each day.

ATHURIEL.

Look to the hills where breaks the day,
Clothing the rugged rocks with crimson surf!
Safe in their fastness, all the world may rage,
And dash its red blood on those rocks in vain.

HAGAR.

Fly while I kiss you, for the day's at hand!
Death comes with light!

ATHURIEL.

I hail the light! The look
That lives within your eyes stays death.

HAGAR.

Look! fly!

ATHURIEL.

I cannot give you up. Last night a cry
Awakened me from sleep. Far in the deep
Recesses of yon hills I followed it,
Not knowing where I went, nor what might wait.
A bruised and bleeding lamb lay 'neath the cliff ;
Close-folded in my arms it sank to rest.

HAGAR.

Oh, that I were a soulless lamb !—then would
I rest within your arms.

ATHURIEL.

My quickened heart
Has heard. I come in answer to your cry,
And safely in my arms you shall find rest.

HAGAR.

Tempt not my soul. My heart bids fly with you,
And yet I dare not, for in dreams this night
I wandered by the river's marge, while winds
Soft murmuring to the sleeping waves,
Swept to the shore a sail, and in it sat
Athuriel. Light springing to the beach
You took my hand. We stepped into the boat.
With low, melodious beat, in measured chant,
Waves lit with lambent fire, broke round our
prow ;

While young night winds slept in the silken sails,
 A storm arose, winds lashed the ashen waves,
 You were no longer master of the craft,
 But at the helm stood the black-hooded priest,
 Stretching his withered arms at me, with voice
 That pierced the tempest, cried, "Your soul is
 lost!"

I clung to you, but as I twined my arms
 About your neck you slipped into the waves.

ATHURIEL.

'Tis but a dream conjured by cunning priest,
 Who curbs the soul with superstition's bit.
 God fills the world with light, e'en as the sun
 Flushes the dark recesses of the earth
 With golden light, dispelling noisome mist,
 Uplifting beauty from the quaggy fen.
 Fly with me from this place ere Moloch clasp
 You in his burning arms.

(Enter ABNER, HAGAR'S FATHER.)

ABNER.

Seducer, fly!

ATHURIEL.

Betrayer of a father's trust, seeking
 To sell her soul to loathsome lust for gold!
 How dare you look her in the face and live?

ABNER.

She treads upon the verge of an abyss.

ATHURIEL.

Thrust by parental hands that smell of blood!

ABNER.

I but exchange her lot of misery
With you for affluence with Abraham.

(Enter ABRAHAM.)

ATHURIEL.

Die, reptile, with the poison in your fangs!

ABRAHAM.

Withhold your hand!

ATHURIEL.

Who made you judge of us?

ABRAHAM.

Blood shed in strife cries unto God.

(To ATHURIEL.)

Your life

Is in my hand.

ATHURIEL.

If that be true, then let
The spirit of the God you own unlock
The death-cells of your heart and give my life
To me.

ABRAHAM.

Then fly this place!

ATHURIEL.

Wilt swear?

ABRAHAM.

I swear.

ATHURIEL.

(*Taking HAGAR by the hand.*)
She is my life. All else is naught to me.

(*ABRAHAM steps in front with spear.*)

ABRAHAM.

A vile deceit. I stand not on my word.

ATHURIEL.

Your oath must stand.

ABNER.

Release her from his hand.

ABRAHAM.

My spear shall loose his hold.

(*He hurls his spear, misses ATHURIEL.*)

ATHURIEL.

Your blood the sands—

(*Enter PRIEST.*)

PRIEST.

Who lifts a hand against the Lord's commands?

ABRAHAM.

Yon heathen dog assails His sovereign will.

(*A sudden storm arises.*)

PRIEST.

Know you the fire, at my command shall fall
From Heaven; consume in its fierce rage all who
Oppose His will. Abase your craven soul
In dust. Cry mightily to Him. Perchance
The bolt now hissing in His hands may pass
You by.

ATHURIEL.

I scorn your vaunted power.

PRIEST.

Behold,

The glooming clouds, swift chariots of His wrath,
Charged with tempestuous ruin, stoop to earth!

Canst feel the tremor of His mighty tread,
And see the flame flash from His angry eye?
Yield ere it be too late.

ATHURIEL.

This storm will pass,
The tender blade will lift again its head.

PRIEST.

For God so wills, but impious man shall fall.

(*A flash of lightning rends a tree near by. HAGAR kneels before ATHURIEL.*)

HAGAR.

Fly from the presence of an angry God!
Our love, unholy in His sight, will be
Avenged in blood. Pray that our hearts be
shrived
Of sin.

ATHURIEL.

Upon the altar of your love
I lay my life. If sin, then sinner would
I be; emblazon all the heavens with sin;
Sweeten the bitter streams of earth with it;
Entice the angels to stoop down and drink!
Come, ere it be too late!

HAGAR.

Have mercy, love,
Upon my soul!

ATHURIEL.

Come with me, Hagar, come,
For life awaits!

HAGAR.

Haste! They who seek your life
Wait at the door!

ATHURIEL.

I cannot leave you, love.

(*Soldiers enter to seize ATHURIEL. HAGAR springs between them crying.*)

HAGAR.

No, no! You shall not take his life! Take mine!

ATHURIEL.

(*Attacking the soldiers.*)
I will die for you!

HAGAR.

(*Clasping him in her arms.*)
Death shall seal our love!

(*The soldiers tear them apart, wound ATHURIEL and hand HAGAR to ABRAHAM. She breaks*

away from them and clasps the prostrate form of ATHURIEL. ABRAHAM again takes her and draws her—looking back at ATHURIEL'S body—from the stage.)

ACT I.

SCENE II.—Og and SOLDIERS *in the Woods.*

Og.

Hold, till I catch my breath.

SOLDIER.

Grip it between your teeth, we're in the woods.

Og.

I'm painfully aware of that, while thorn
And bramble enfilade my front. I am
An elephant within the brake and leave
Behind a path of broken trees and gore.
Let's find a trail or open big enough
To let me through without a gout of blood.

SOLDIER.

No rest, till we have found Athuriel.
Some ill betides, that hinders his return.

Og.

That scamp will be the death o' me.

SOLDIER.

Why so?

From fear?

Og.

Fear! Think you I'm afraid? 'Tis loss
Of sleep and appetite. These tramps at night
Rob me of half my flesh.

SOLDIER.

Pray for more nights,
And lose the other half.

SECOND SOLDIER (*Enters*).

Gird on your swords!
Athuriel is a captive!

Og.

Yes, of love.

His days are dreams. His nights moon-mad.

With sighs

And languid looks he mopes about and leaves
The state to me. I'm famished for a rest,
And yet must tramp these woods in search of
him.

A pothe on this love!

SECOND SOLDIER.

No, death, not love,
Has got him now. The soldiers march this way.

SOLDIER.

Ambush the pass and prove your steel.

Og.

My sword
Shall smoke with slaughter till the last foe yields.
You barricade the way; I'll execute
The flank.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Your paunch will fill that pass and we
Will fall upon the flanks.

Og.

I face the foe
Alone?

SOLDIER.

You have no fear.

Og.

I fear? When I
Am barbed, grim visaged war sits on my front,
And fear falls on the enemy!

SOLDIERS (*in unison*).

The foe! (*Og falls and soldiers drag him to the entrance and leave him in haste going off the stage. ABRAHAM's soldiers enter dragging ATHURIEL and stumble over Og, who jumps up with a yell; they are frightened and loose ATHURIEL and flee.*)

ATHURIEL.

What brought you here?

Og.

Love.

ATHURIEL.

Explain.

Og.

You see

I've been disturbed of late by your strange ways,
And knowing well, from sad experience,
The course of your disease, have kept one eye
Awake, and when I found your chamber stripped
Of robes and lute, and redolent with myrrh,
My mind flew to the dog-star of your dreams;
And fearing lest you pull some sad mishap
Upon your head, I grasped my trusty sword,
And sallied forth.

ATHURIEL.

In search of me?

OG.

I saw

The hirelings bind your arms, bend down a tree,
 Fasten the noose about your neck. With one
 Fierce blow I cleft the trunk in twain, then
 thought

Upon this pass and blocked their way.

ATHURIEL.

Dared you

Attack the enemy alone?

OG.

I dare?

I'd pluck my image from the lion's mouth.

ATHURIEL.

Knowing that they must pass this way you slept?

OG.

The heart that knows no fear will find repose
 Upon the wind tossed wave, the yawning chasm,
 The lion's whelpless den.

ATHURIEL (*draws from Og's pocket a rooster.*)

ATHURIEL.

What's this?

Og.

This is

A herald of the day, to break my dreams
Of love.

ATHURIEL.

What do you know of love?

Og.

Before

I had this paunch, I was a stripling filled
With sighs, wore hanging locks besmeared with
oil;

Danced as a fawn, sang as a bird and loved
With all my callow brain a star-eyed nymph.
We built our nest midst flowers and leaves, and
then

Her sister came; I slept in the back room;
Her mother next,—I slept upon the floor;
And when her father came, I sought the barn;—
My nymph ate onions;—then I drew my sword,
And took—

ATHURIEL.

Her life? .

Og. .

The road.

ATHURIEL.

Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Come, brigand of the merry heart, we'll spend
 The night on yonder hills with laugh and jest,
 And one brief hour forget my woe.

(Exit ATHURIEL and OG.)

ACT I.

SCENE III.—ABRAHAM'S *Tent*.

Present SARAH. Enter ABRAHAM leading HAGAR.

SARAH.

What now?

ABRAHAM.

'Tis Abraham, your lord.

SARAH.

And this?

ABRAHAM.

A handmaid unto you.

SARAH.

Who brings her here

Against my will?



W.M. Lincoln Hudson

ABRAHAM.
A handmaid unto you.

ABRAHAM.

I, Abraham.

SARAH.

Your will?

ABRAHAM.

Is law.

SARAH.

Enforce it, then. Wanton, begone!

ABRAHAM.

The Evil One beguiles your tongue.

SARAH.

And leads

Your heart astray.

ABRAHAM.

Forget not in your rage
The promise made to me.

SARAH.

Was it not made to me
As well?

ABRAHAM.

Do you recall your age?

SARAH.

My age?

The frosts unmelted cling within your beard
Despite your amorous breath.

ABRAHAM.

Enough of this.

Can you not own the name of mighty sheik,
Whose flocks fill all the fields?

SARAH.

A name! A name
Emptied of life! A ghost to haunt my days!

ABRAHAM.

What frenzy racks your brain? My name must
be
A legacy to ages. You will share
The glory as the wife of Abraham.
So must it be.

SARAH.

Trust in the Lord. He will
Fulfill the promise made. This comely maid
Whose cheek the roses kiss, doubtless may find
Some lover not deflowered by age. Let him
Possess your name.

ABRAHAM.

A pagan in your heart.

SARAH.

Divide your flocks with him.

ABRAHAM.

Athuriel?

SARAH.

Why speak that name?

ABRAHAM.

A race accursed is his.

SARAH.

Hagar, does he not live upon the hills?

Your heart has he not sieged with passion's
tongue?

(HAGAR *buries her face in her hands.*)

I charge you speak!

ABRAHAM.

That name must ne'er be heard
Within these walls.

SARAH.

Ah, even as the moon

Lifts its pale face above yon hills and looks
With searching eye into your tent, the ghost

Of him you've wronged will gaze into your eyes
And banish sleep.

ABRAHAM.

[Accursed be such speech. (*He withdraws.*)

SARAH.

What brought you here to vex my soul?

HAGAR.

My will
Is not my own.

SARAH.

Away with semblant speech!
The serpent's mottled skin dulls not its fangs.

HAGAR.

God knows my heart.

SARAH.

Then fly from here.

HAGAR.

I fain
Would fly from you.

SARAH.

Aha! and take my lord!
His flocks and herds would richly you endow.

HAGAR.

Dis-house my soul; look in my face! Can it
Betray my heart? Can you recall when light
Shone in your eyes and love's strange words first
stirred
Your maiden heart?

SARAH.

Soft, purring leopardess!

HAGAR.

Your heart bears witness that my words are
true.

Love cannot nestle in the arms of age.

SARAH.

How came you here?

HAGAR.

By God's command.

SARAH.

Spake He
To you?

HAGAR.

Yes, through His awful priest.

SARAH.

In dreams

Does He not speak to you?

HAGAR.

Often at night

Visions suffused in light steal in my room.

SARAH.

Angels! Trust them and thus be led of God.

HAGAR.

Sweet words unto my troubled soul. Would I
Could rest on them.

SARAH.

Fly to Athuriel!

HAGAR.

The shadow of that awful priest shuts out
The light and bars my way.

SARAH.

Your heart confirms
My words.

HAGAR.

Athuriel!

SARAH.

Haste hence! Console
Your constant lover's heart. Why stand in
doubt?

(Enter PRIEST and ABRAHAM.)

HAGAR.

The Father's will,—if I but knew.

ABRAHAM.

My will.—

PRIEST.

Hail, mother of a mighty race!

SARAH.

Not so,

I stand abased.

PRIEST.

Lift up thy fallen head,
For God hath heard thy prayers and given thee
An heir. From Abram's loins shall spring a son,
And nations yet unborn shall own his name.
This maid the Lord hath singled out to bear
A son for thee, and great shall be thy name
In all the earth. Keep her, the Lord commands,

Bless Abraham and humbly pray thy heart
May be forgiven its rebellious thoughts.
Hagar, the pallid cheek proclaims thy heart
Pure as the light. Be thankful unto Him,
Who leads thy feet, reluctant, into ways
Of wisdom and of truth. Proud Abraham!
The Lord hath blessed thee much. Bring forth
the tithes
The Lord requires of thee, and offer sweet
Oblations unto Him.

ABRAHAM.

A tenth of all
I have I give to Him. With wine and oil,
And fat of rams I'll praise His holy name.

(Enter attendants of the PRIEST.)

PRIEST.

Attend on Abraham and single out
The firstlings of the flock, with blemish none.

(Attendants march out with trumpets and drums.)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—ABRAHAM'S *Tent.* Present SARAH.

SARAH.

How gracious is the Lord in all his ways!
He hath compassion on mine age and hath
Renewed my youth, and my reproach is washed
Away. I will rejoice, give thanks, and sing,
For all that He has done for me. I will
Enlarge His name and heap the smoking altars
high,

With thankful offerings. Hagar, no more
Shall flaunt her wiles, nor steal my husband's
heart.

Isaac is heir and Ishmael shall lose
This heritage. Now mistress will I be.

(Enter HAGAR.)

HAGAR.

You sent for me?

SARAH.

Why came you not before?

HAGAR.

I came when I was called.

SARAH.

Wait on my wish.
Bear reverence in your mien and speech.

HAGAR.

In what
Have I offended you?

SARAH.

Be silent when I speak.
That servant knows his place, who waits
With eye and hand the master's will. Your time
Must not be filched by Ishmael, and, mind,
Isaac is heir.

HAGAR.

I did but teach my child.

SARAH.

You teach your child! A servant versed in books!
Ha, ha! With learning he will be crammed full
Of airs and toss his head and strut, and wear
The sign of servitude with ill content.

HAGAR.

A slave! My child a slave?

SARAH.

Most certainly.

HAGAR.

The son of Abraham a slave?

SARAH.

The son!

HAGAR.

The curse of Ham shall never rest on him.

SARAH.

Have care how wags your wayward tongue.

HAGAR.

I have

Obeyed your slightest wish; have given suck
Unto your son, who famished on your age;
Have felt his soft hands knead my breast; have
soothed

His fears; have stilled his cries, and kissed away
His tears; entwined his heart strings into mine.
Alas! that I should lovingly give life
To him the master, mine, the slave! This thought
Infects the fountains of my life. No lips
Can drink and live.

SARAH.

What means this senseless rage?
 Dare you attempt the life of helpless babe?

HAGAR.

Such thoughts betray the heart. I cherish not
 Revenge, but if I did, the sleeping babe
 Would chase the hideous phantom from my
 brain.

SARAH.

I fear the evil spirit in your heart.
 Away! Take Ishmael from my sight!

(Enter ABRAHAM.)

ABRAHAM.

What means
 All this? Hagar in tears?

SARAH.

Yes, tears,—the foils
 To turn men's wits that tempters always use.

ABRAHAM.

Why wrangle so? At home all should be peace.
 The world is hard; strife rules the mart,
 But when we cross the threshold of our homes
 We lay this by and long for rest.

Hagar.

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SARAH.

Put fat and fire in the pot and then expect
No flame! What men exact they must return,
For love knows no default.

ABRAHAM.

Desist, desist!

The wilderness were better than this strife.

SARAH.

Let Hagar seek it, then.

ABRAHAM.

Unruly tongue,

I'll send the scape-goat thence. Come to my tent.
(*They withdraw, leaving HAGAR with ISHMAEL
in her arms.*)

HAGAR.

A slave! Thrust from my arms, despised, de-
spoiled!

Was my heart ravished of its love for this?

Look not so trustingly into my eyes,

My Ishmael, or you will read my sins.

A slave! My God, can this be my reward?

Have I not followed faith, betrayed my heart?
Debased my life and lost my soul? Take him,

My little lamb, into Thy tender arms !
Let not my sins fall on his head. Lead him,
If need be, in the wilderness, where its
Inhospitable wastes allow no slaves.

(Enter SARAH and PRIEST.)

SARAH.

Away with Ishmael ! Out of my sight !

(Exit HAGAR and ISHMAEL.)

Life elbows life within this tent.

PRIEST.

Its girth

Expands from year to year.

SARAH.

'Tis not enough.

PRIEST.

What stirs your ire ?

SARAH.

The sight of Hagar's son,
Uncurbed, rebellious barb, who rudely smites
Our gentle Isaac, while his pagan dam
Bewails the stripes I give him. She a sly,
Unthankful jade, steals toothsome bits for him,
Holding with jealous eye our heir.

PRIEST.

Think you

She plots against the heir?

SARAH.

Even so.

PRIEST.

He is the promised one.

SARAH.

A serpent may

Supplant, and satan owes him wrong.

PRIEST.

Even so

'Tis writ, but mothers have foreboding hearts.
What ill have you discerned?

SARAH.

I tremble when

She's near the lad and fear takes hold on him.
He starts and as a bird that fain would fly
Yields to the charmer's eyes.

PRIEST.

Does she resent

Your chastisement?

SARAH.

She mopes and cries.

PRIEST.

And answers back?

SARAH.

Save with reproachful looks.

PRIEST.

You would be rid of her?

SARAH.

Of her and him.

PRIEST.

I fear that Abraham will take it ill.

SARAH.

And yet I must.

PRIEST.

Then some sufficient cause
Must lead to this, some act, or word by which
We may construe her ways; bethink you well.

SARAH.

She weeps, at times, and starts when I approach.

Hagar.

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PRIEST.

Had she a lover once?

SARAH.

Why think you that?

PRIEST.

And pines for him?

SARAH.

What power reveals—

PRIEST.

The heart

Cannot forget its first, fond loves. The oak
Uprooted by the tempest, dies. The vine
Enshrines the wreck with tender leaves.

SARAH.

Think you

He lives?

PRIEST.

Are not the flocks disturbed at night?

SARAH.

Yes, often.

PRIEST.

Are the firstlings of the flock
Left for the sacrifice?

SARAH.

The hills are filled
With countless thieves.

PRIEST.

Who leads the robber band?

SARAH.

Athuriel?

PRIEST.

Athuriel. The Lord
Demands His rights.

(*Exit PRIEST. Enter ABRAHAM.*)

ABRAHAM.

What said the priest?

SARAH.

The priest?

“The firstlings of the flock belong to God,
And are withheld from Him. Some curse will
fall
From Heaven and sweep away your herds if thus
You falsely deal.”

ABRAHAM.

If I be false, then let
It fall.

SARAH.

Beware! The Lord knoweth our thoughts
Before we speak. 'Twere vain to hide from Him.

ABRAHAM.

Nothing have I withheld.

SARAH.

Then bring your tithes.
The firstlings of the flock.

ABRAHAM.

I cannot.

SARAH.

Why?

ABRAHAM.

The bandits from the hills sweep them away.

SARAH.

Can you not guard against these nightly raids?

ABRAHAM.

The prescience of these thieves outwits all guards.

SARAH.

O, slow of wit, can you not see through this?

ABRAHAM.

How can one fight with satan's wiles?

SARAH.

Satan!

Look in your tent where sleeps upon your couch
The serpent that beguiles your tongue at night.

ABRAHAM.

'Tis false!

SARAH.

Rest in your sensual dreams, but God
Will reckon in that day a stern account.

ABRAHAM.

How dare you lay this charge?

SARAH.

Dare you demand

The proof?

ABRAHAM.

I do.

SARAH.

Lie in the tent hard by.

(ABRAHAM *retires to his tent.* SARAH *calls her maids ESTHER and RACHEL, and taking them aside where ABRAHAM cannot hear, instructs them what to do.*)

SARAH.

Know you where Hagar is?

RACHEL.

Within her tent.

SARAH.

What does she now?

ESTHER.

She weeps.

SARAH.

Know you the cause?

RACHEL.

She makes no confidant of us.

SARAH.

Has she

Not poured complaints into your ears?

ESTHER.

She trusts
Us not.

SARAH.

Her secrets are her own. Ah, well!
Have you not seen and heard strange things at
night?

BOTH MAIDS.

We have.

SARAH.

Last night?

MAIDS.

Last night.

SARAH.

Saw some one let
The robbers in?

MAIDS.

The robbers?

SARAH.

Yes, robbers.

A woman veiled in black.

MAIDS.

In black?

(Enter HAGAR.)

SARAH (*To maids*).

Withdraw.

What brings you here?

HAGAR.

To do my master's will.

SARAH.

What would you do?

HAGAR.

Attend the flocks to-night.

SARAH.

Why ask you this?

HAGAR.

A storm comes with the night.
The tender lambs will need most faithful care.

SARAH.

A storm? The sky is clear.

HAGAR.

Can you not hear
The rustle of its wings among the trees?

SARAH.

I hear no sound; feel not the slightest breath.

HAGAR.

The spirits speak in the complaining winds
And harbinger events to ears attuned.

SARAH.

Speak they in dreams?

HAGAR.

They often come to me
At night, and lift the burdens from my heart.

SARAH.

Then it is not at ease?

HAGAR.

Why should it be?

SARAH.

Have you not Abraham, also his son?

HAGAR.

I had a son—

SARAH.

Not Abraham's?

HAGAR.

—but now

He is a slave. The fountains of my life
Are dried and God and man have cast me off.

SARAH.

Would you go forth from here?

HAGAR.

I so have prayed.

SARAH.

Seek him you once betrayed? Your silence has
A thousand tongues. Speak!

HAGAR.

I now would go.

SARAH.

Words veil the mind but not the heart. Your
Love lives not with Abraham. Athuriel
Still claims your heart. Love loosens all the
bonds

Masters may bind, unlocks the creaking doors
With noiseless keys and bids the lover in.

HAGAR.

Are not the flocks safe housed at night?

SARAH.

What counts
If treason draws the bolts?

HAGAR.

Who stoops to this?

SARAH.

In whom confides my lord?

HAGAR.

His lawful spouse,
Who sleeps not save with Isaac in her arms.

SARAH.

And trembles oft at night when some lone lamb
Bleats for its ravished dam.

HAGAR.

You charge this crime
To me?

SARAH.

Speak softly. There be itching ears.

HAGAR.

I can confide my life to them.

SARAH.

Invoke

The scandal of false tongues? Hagar, beware!
For virtue never flaunts its worth. Only
The double lives need gloss the front, and meet
The public gaze with feigned indifference.
Dare you deny Athuriel owns your heart,
That he would steal our heir and foist your son
As Abraham's successor? Well the plot
Is laid, and Abraham, good, trusting soul,
Sleeps unconcerned, while thieves and traitors
Plan his taking off.

HAGAR.

'Tis false! And vain to look
For pity in your soul, good dame, safe housed
And fed. Tempests may sweep your sister's bark
Far from its moorings, yet you lift no hand
To drag her from the waves.

SARAH.

False to your heart;
False to Athuriel—Aye, Abraham!
Why should you look for pity here?

HAGAR.

Spare me.

SARAH.

Confide in me and tell the truth.

HAGAR.

I cannot.

SARAH.

You love him still?

HAGAR.

Why tear these wounds afresh?

SARAH.

And see him oft at night?

HAGAR.

In solitude
My heart abides. Let me go forth alone.

SARAH.

Poor heart, cut off from youthful dreams of love,
Sadly awaking to each dreary day.
The night winds whisper of Athuriel,
Who, faithful watches with the waning stars.
This lance he bore last night. Why start?
Was it his spirit spoke your name?

HAGAR!

Dead?

SARAH.

The hills are peopled with his dread. No night
Falls without fear, while flocks from peaceful
folds
Are silently withdrawn 'twixt sleeping guards.

HAGAR.

Why speak to me of this?

SARAH.

Why seek to guard
The folds this night?

HAGAR.

I told you of the storm.
(SARAH *signals for maids and two enter.*)

SARAH.

Attend! Speak only what your eyes have seen
And ears have heard.

RACHEL.

We saw Athuriel
Last night come in the fold and drive the flocks
Away.

ESTHER.

And some one oped the gates for him.

SARAH.

What, saw you this? Be careful how you speak!

BOTH MAIDS.

With mine own eyes.

SARAH.

You were but dreaming.

RACHEL.

I

Was never more awake.

ESTHER.

Nor I. We heard
Them whisper at the gate; the horsemen then
rode

Boldly in and seized on us, stifling
Our cries with fear, demanding that we bring
The heir. We feigned assent, led them astray,
And then made our escape.

SARAH.

Who let them in?

BOTH MAIDS.

We know not. 'Twas some woman closely veiled.

SARAH.

A woman?

BOTH.

Yes, a woman veiled in black.

HAGAR.

It is not true.

SARAH.

Wait till I speak to you!

HAGAR.

'Tis false!

SARAH.

Who has accused you save yourself?

(Enter ABRAHAM.)

ABRAHAM.

It is enough.

HAGAR.

Hear me, I pray!

ABRAHAM.

Away!

And thankful be that I have spared your life!

HAGAR.

Have I done aught to merit this?

ABRAHAM.

Have I
Not heard your wiles while lying in the tent?

HAGAR.

Who dares accuse me face to face?

ABRAHAM.

Your sins
Have found you out. Curse not your soul
With perjury.

HAGAR.

This is a scheme which fiends
Might gloat to conjure up.

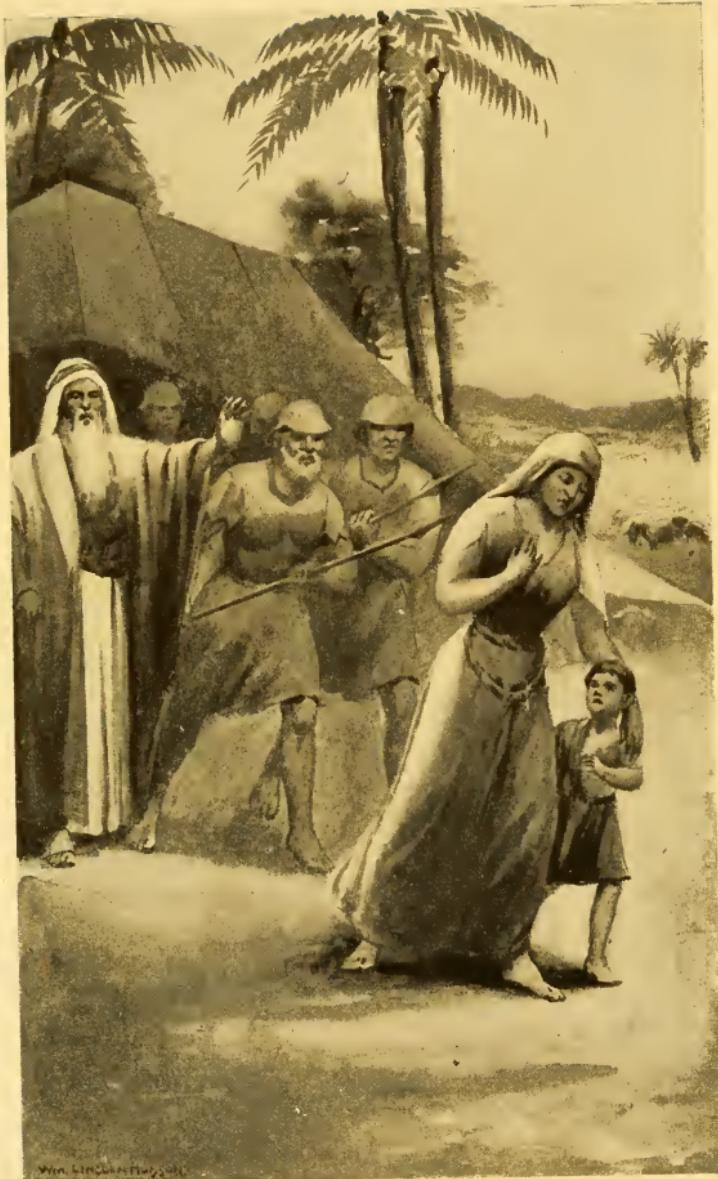
SARAH.

Your own black cowl
Is silent witness of your crimes. The wrath
Of God is kindling while the flames expire
Upon the blackened altars, where is laid
No sacrifice. (*SARAH sends a maid for ISH-MAEL.*)

ABRAHAM.

Ho, guards!

(Enter maid with ISHMAEL, guards and soldiers follow. He hands ISHMAEL to HAGAR.)
Here, take your child!



ABRAHAM.

Alarm the drums, drive forth
The evil one!

HAGAR.

Is this the measure of my unrequited toil?

ABRAHAM.

Away! (*HAGAR turns to the soldiers.*)

HAGAR.

Pity must linger in some heart
For me.

SOLDIER.

Death in the desert waits for him.
Give him to me!

HAGAR.

My child! my child! Give him
Away? No, let his icy fingers clasp
My neck in death!

ABRAHAM.

Alarm the drums, drive forth
The evil one!

(*The SOLDIERS drive her out, leading ISHMAEL.*)

ACT II.

SCENE II.—*Night in the forest near ATHURIEL'S Camp. Present ATHURIEL and OG.*

ATHURIEL.

Let us have peace. I'm weary of this chaff.

OG.

But hungry stomachs must cry out.

ATHURIEL.

Then drink

The wind.

OG.

That's what I've fed upon for weeks.

ATHURIEL.

Well, stuff yourself and sleep. Let me alone.

OG.

You cannot live on sighs. The cabbage has
More color than your cheek.

ATHURIEL.

More in its head

Than yours.

Og.

A sounder heart—

ATHURIEL.

A stomach, say.

Og.

The stomach is the man.

ATHURIEL.

Why so?

Og.

For this

He works and thinks. When it is full, he smiles ;
When empty, cross and full of fears. From it
Arise his thoughts, his dreams, his sleepless
nights,

His pleasures and his pains—perhaps his loves.

ATHURIEL.

What do you know of love ?

Og.

A forester,

Who leads us in the tangled woods of our
Desires to the sweet flower that blooms for us
Within some hidden dell ; and as we stretch
Our hands, he rudely snatches it away.

ATHURIEL.

A fiend!

Og.

A merry trickster. Why not laugh
With him? Love is the passion of an hour,
The ripple on the stream—disease of youth,
Like measles.

ATHURIEL.

Did you ever love?

Og.

I love?

Capacious natures drink the most and love's
Sweet draughts intoxicate. I can recall
The inn, the comely matron with a store
Descended from her former lord, and while
I feasted on her wine, Love tipped his barb
Within my heart. The glamour of her eyes
Suffused my soul in happy dreams, and as
The traveler upon the shifting sands
Beholds the sparkling fountains and the groves
Filled with sweet fruits and singing birds, thinks
that
His journey's done, so I, but 'twas a false
Mirage.

ATHURIEL.

How many bones lie on the sands!
Death is a constant lover.

Og.

Talk of death!

Ugh, why?

ATHURIEL.

Because I wish to die.

Og.

You die?

After the blood I've shed in saving you
From Abram's sword?

ATHURIEL.

Come, tell us what you did.

Og.

My sword more eloquently speaks than words.
This trusty blade looks like a saw. Each nick
Was made upon an enemy. Their spears
I gathered in my arms; inspired our ranks
With thunder of my voice till every heart
Was filled with valor, as a torrent pent
That bursts its barriers, we swept all away.

ATHURIEL.

Were many killed in this forlorn affray?

Og.

I walked upon the dead.

ATHURIEL.

'Tis strange how this
Affair has grown with each recital.

Og.

Strange?

Thus history is writ. The actor is
A living page which grows with each recital.
We get out of the page what we put in.

ATHURIEL.

Bring me a drink.

Og.

Here, drain my flask.

ATHURIEL.

No, no.

Water, I want to slake my thirst.

Og.

The spring's
A long way off. I'll ooze more moisture than
My arms can bring.

ATHURIEL.

Then sweat, and sweat, and sweat,
And thus do justice to your legs.

Og.

How so?

ATHURIEL.

You carry on your legs two men. A mass
Of leeks, ram's fat and oil. Your nose,
A gory buckler bossed and scarred, protrudes
Before your face like horn of unicorn.

Og.

Give me your rotund men, that eat and drink,
And laugh and live. None of your lean and lank,
Low livered kine, that mince and sip, and sigh,
And stalk the earth as hungry dreams, that eat
The joys of earth and yet distill the bane
Of blight. (*Exit Og after water.* ATHURIEL
aside.)

ATHURIEL.

Philosopher and fool. How thin the wall
That separates. Wisdom of yesterday
Is foolishness to-day. The sight of seers,
The dreams of youth are fashions of the mist
That fade beneath the light. Our faiths, our
hopes,
Our loves elude our grasp, and we are left
Unfaithed, unloved—then why not be a fool,
And prate and posture through this life?

(*Enter SOLDIER, followed by Og.*)

SOLDIER.

Athuriel!

ATHURIEL.

What now?

SOLDIER.

Hagar has fled

From Abraham!

ATHURIEL.

When heard you this?

SOLDIER.

Even now

The priest pursues her to the wilderness.

ATHURIEL.

By all the gods, he shall not take her back!

(Og cuts a flourish as they go out.)

ACT II.

SCENE III.—*Night in the woods. Enter HAGAR and ISHMAEL.*

HAGAR.

Hush! darling, for the day is dead and night
Creeps from its lonely lair. Sleep in my arms,

For God may wake us to another day.

(ATHURIEL enters from the rear.)

A drink? Would that my tears might quench
your thirst!

But dream of fountains gushing from the hills,
Of bright dews flashing from the angels' wings,
Which hover near and guard our sleep. Asleep!
Oh, God! With bitter anguish would I cry,
But hungry beasts awake at fall of night,
With fierce complainings as they sniff the wind,
Encroaching as the tides some sea-girt isle.
Into Thy hands I now commit my child!

His innocence must plead with Thee! Let not
My sins cut off his days! He dies of thirst!
Look, Lord, into his little face, so sweet,
So innocent, yet traced with pain in sleep!
Take him into Thine everlasting arms!
My blood shall quench the lions' thirst—hush!—

*Breathe softly, my baby, and do not cry,
Though darkness and danger are drawing nigh;
Alone in the forest where none can hear,
But God and the angels, my baby dear.*

*The cool winds are wet with the silver dew,
That angels will gather the whole night through.
And bring in the lily when morn is near,
For God is still good to us, baby dear.*

*Start not at the sound of each stealthy tread,
The stars are still watching just overhead;
This earth may be cruel, but Heaven is near,
And God will be good to us, baby dear.*

*Then wake not, my darling, from rest to pain,
But pillow your head on my bosom again.
'Twas only the bittern's boom over the mere,
And God will protect us, my baby dear.*

*The wild beasts are lurking around our way,
Yet man is more cruel, dear, than they,
Hush! hush! 'Tis the panther's cry, Oh, so near!
But God is more close to us, baby dear.*

(ATHURIEL appears with a cruse of water and places it near them, unobserved, and withdraws to a distance, keeping watch and fending off the beasts of prey. The moon rises; she discovers the water and gives ISHMAEL a drink.)

Wait, darling, for a while, then drink again;
Rest on this bed of leaves and dream of Heaven,
For God has sent His angel unto us,
Bringing this cruse of water and has shut
The mouths of hungry lions while we slept.

(ISHMAEL again sleeps.)

This is an awful place where God descends,
And walks in darkness through these mighty
woods.

Each flower may peer into His face and fill
Its cup. Why should I fear? Has He not led
Me safely through the night? For now the dawn
Lifts the dim curtains of these leafy aisles,
And cowering beasts slink to their gloomy caves.

(*Enter a SOLDIER of ATHURIEL.*)

HAGAR.

Come you with peace or with a sword?

SOLDIER.

With peace.

HAGAR.

Have pity on our plight and spare my child.

SOLDIER.

A child, where is he?

HAGAR.

Here beneath these leaves.

SOLDIER.

Spent you the night within these woods?

HAGAR.

We did.

SOLDIER.

Among these hungry beasts? It cannot be.

HAGAR.

The Lord hath sent His angel and shut fast
Their mouths.

SOLDIER.

Trust you the Lord?

HAGAR.

Him only can
I trust. (*ATHURIEL comes forward where he
can hear.*)

SOLDIER.

Why has He led you here to die?

HAGAR.

I know not, still I cling to Him.

SOLDIER.

Have you
No home?

SARAH.

I had a place with Abraham.

SOLDIER.

Why left you it?

HAGAR.

Have mercy on my child!

Lay not my sins to him; I am cast out
To die.

SOLDIER.

Did Abraham do this?

HAGAR.

He did.

SOLDIER.

He is a man of good report. Had he
No cause?

HAGAR.

His lawful wife has borne an heir.

SOLDIER.

A son?

HAGAR.

A son, yes, Isaac is his name.

SOLDIER.

Then strife arose between his wife and you?

HAGAR.

My child must be supplanted by the heir;
I was cast out.

SOLDIER.

'Twas not sufficient cause.
Have you been faithful unto Abraham?

HAGAR.

The Lord is witness of my life.

SOLDIER.

Had you
No lover that aroused his jealousy?

HAGAR.

I had a lover once, but I was false
To him, but true to Abraham.

SOLDIER.

And seek
The injured lover now?

HAGAR.

I would behold
His face once more.

SOLDIER.

Why seek you him?

HAGAR.

To cast

Myself before his feet and give my child
To him.

SOLDIER.

Then what?

HAGAR.

Go forth and die.

SOLDIER.

Think you

He will forget his wrongs? His enemy
Forgive and nurture up his child?

HAGAR.

His heart

Was kind. My tears might yet prevail.

SOLDIER.

Men grow

Severe, and contact with the world benumbs
The finer sense. Your lover has forgot
His fervid vows, and doubtless found a wife.

HAGAR.

He was so kind, so true! His heart might seek
Another love to solace his lone hours,
But he would never turn my child away.

(ATHURIEL comes forward and discloses himself.)

ATHURIEL.

Hagar!

HAGAR.

Athuriel! (*She falls in his arms.*)

ATHURIEL.

Queen of my hungry heart, all mine is yours!

HAGAR.

My child!

ATHURIEL.

My heir.

HAGAR.

Your life the Lord has blessed.
You have been true, but God hath dealt with me
According to my sins. Let me go forth.

ATHURIEL.

Never shall you depart from me. (*Enter
PRIEST.*)

PRIEST.

Aha!

In vain you flee from God, whose awful eyes
Flash through the world, as lightning leaps
athwart

The heavens, discerning all His children do.
Darkness and light, the caves, the sea, all yield
Their secrets when He calls.

ATHURIEL.

Why come you here?

PRIEST.

The servant of the Lord empanoplied
With power. In fear bow down and hear.

ATHURIEL.

Servant

Of sin, beware, for outraged justice lifts
Her head and cries, vengeance is mine, though
long
Deferred, and with unstinted hand I'll mete
It out to you!

PRIEST.

Lay not an impious hand
On God's anointed one!

ATHURIEL.

That messenger,
Whose unpolluted life breathes hope and peace,
Whose stainless hands bear blessings to the poor;

Who binds the wounds that sin has made, and
 curbs
Th' oppressor's power and sets the captive free,
Will find in me a friend; but woe to him
Who, servile, serves the great.

PRIEST.

God will avenge
My wrongs.

ATHURIEL.

Your wrongs! Aye, wrongs that you have done!
Call mightily to Him, in this your hour
Of need. (*He signals for his soldiers to come forward.*)

PRIEST.

You will not take my life?

ATHURIEL.

Cry not
To me, false priest, but to your God!

PRIEST.

Have mercy!

ATHURIEL.

Know you the meaning of that word? You who
Have blasted happy lives, and bruised the heart

Of helpless innocence? Where turned aside
To wash the wounded victim from his blood,
To lift the head of sorrow from its bed,
And consolation give to those who mourn?
Think fast! His finger feels the steel!

PRIEST.

If my

Last hour has come, I would undo the wrong
I did you when I gave your promised bride
To Abraham, but God now brings her back,
And I would by His holy rite make her
Your wife.

ATHURIEL.

Hagar, if yet within your heart
There lives some love for me, arise! All these
Be witnesses, that I have loved, and live
Alone for thee.

PRIEST.

God witness while I seal
Your vows

HAGAR.

No, no! Some servant of the Lord
Whose hand is not defiled with bribes, shall seal
Our vows. May He who treasures all our tears,

Avenge my wrongs; cast out your blackened
soul,

Where fiends with pestilential breath, will blow
The hissing flames upon your shrinking flesh!
Away!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—ATHURIEL'S *Camp*.

ATHURIEL.

'Tis time that Abram's caravan returned,
And it must not escape. Let every hill
Have eyes, and every point of vantage peer
Quite through his ways.

SOLDIER.

It is already done.

SECOND SOLDIER.

A courier came this morn puffed up with news.

ATHURIEL.

Bring him to me.

SECOND SOLDIER.

He is asleep; it was
A weary ride.

ATHURIEL.

Disturb him not. What did
He bring?

SECOND SOLDIER.

That Abram's caravan draws near
And camps hard by the spring.

ATHURIEL.

Ambush the pass.

SOLDIER.

It is already done.

ATHURIEL.

See that no slip
Occurs to mar our plans. (*Exit soldiers.*)

ATHURIEL.

This day my hand
Holds Abram's all;—an enemy who'd work
Me ill because I prick his pride; and yet
I will but right my wrongs, not vengeance wreak
Upon the innocent. (*Enter soldiers.*)

SOLDIER.

Athuriel,

A man without!

ATHURIEL.

What is his name?

SOLDIER.

He will

Not give it me, but says he has for you
Important word.

ATHURIEL.

Bring him within.

*(The soldier retires, and returns bringing ABNER
disguised.)*

Speak, man.

ABNER.

My words are for your ear alone.

ATHURIEL.

(To soldiers.)

Withdraw.

ABNER.

Most haughty foe of Abraham, I bring
Tidings of great portent.

ATHURIEL.

Put off your guise,
Thus may you speak more fittingly.

ABNER.

My words

May find more favor than my face.

ATHURIEL.

The face

Is mirror of the mind. Evil will force
The front and feature every look. Goodness
Will clothe the rugged brow with comeliness.

ABNER.

May I not trust your ear?

ATHURIEL.

Speak without fear.

ABNER.

The caravan which Abram sent returns
This day. Is now camped by the spring.

ABNER.

What else?

ABNER.

Their guards are few, surprise this night would
put
Them in your power. No one would know how
they
Were taken off.

ATHURIEL.

Wouldst smite the sleeping camp?

ABNER.

Most gladly.

ATHURIEL.

Let no one escape?

ABNER.

If age

Or innocence escape my sword, let dogs
Lick up my blood. Revenge, revenge I seek!
'Tis incense to my breast.

ATHURIEL.

On whom do you
Seek vengeance?

ABNER.

Abraham.

ATHURIEL.

Then siege his lair
And prove the valor of your ruthless arm.

ABNER.

Aha! Revenge ploughs deeper than the life.
I'd let him live, yet take away his life.

ATHURIEL.

And slake your thirst upon the innocent?

ABNER.

His blood, and for it he will droop and die.
He wronged my child, cut off the heritage,
Has cast her out, bestows his flocks and herds
On Isaac. If I slay the heir, he then
Would seek my child, restore her rights and
mine.

ATHURIEL.

I fear your heart would weaken at the last,
And tears of innocence ransom the heir.

ABNER.

Does pity lurk within my face? (*He begins to undo the mask.*)

ATHURIEL.

No need!

Your face is partner to your heart.

(Enter HAGAR, who sits beside ATHURIEL.)
(ABNER looks at her.)

ABNER.

Let me,

I pray, depart. (ATHURIEL addresses the soldiers.)

ATHURIEL.

Take him without the camp.

HAGAR.

Who was that man?

ATHURIEL.

A spy.

HAGAR.

Somewhere I've heard
That voice.

ATHURIEL.

Perchance.

HAGAR.

What brings him here?

ATHURIEL.

Revenge.

HAGAR.

Foul growth of craven hearts. List not to him.
Why wait we in this forest's dark defile?

ATHURIEL.

To rest upon the tender turf and dream,
For now the waning year brings round its dole
Of fruits, and leaves are burnished into gold

And flame by autumn suns, while blue mists
swathe
The hills. Earth sinks to sleep undreamful what
Her fretful children do. Here, undisturbed
By care, we'll spend an hour in joy.

(Enter chorus of maidens singing and dancing.)

*Where the forest shade is deepest,
Where the bird sings ever sweetest,
Where the vine, in soft folds clinging,
From the pendant bough is swinging,
And the wind faints and reposes,
Dying on the breast of roses,
Trip we in the merry dance,
While the moonbeams glint and glance
From the leaves with dew stars burning,
Till the sun, in strength returning,
Drinks the freshness from the flowers,
Fills with light the leafy bowers.*

*Here, where shadows love to linger,
Where the eglantine's soft finger
Folds the frond in dim uncertain
Robe of incense like a curtain;
Rest and dream until the shadow
Falls upon the fir and mallow,*

*Till the merry dance is swinging,
Till the footfalls faint are ringing,
And the hours in chiming measure
Fill the heart with languid pleasure.
And the drowsy eyelids close,
And the spirit seeks repose. (Enter soldier.)*

SOLDIER.

Here come the captives, big with spoil!

ATHURIEL.

Escaped?

No one

SOLDIER.

Not one.

ATHURIEL.

Turn them unto our camp.

HAGAR.

What does this mean?

ATHURIEL.

It means that I have wrought
Upon our enemy.

HAGAR.

Not Abraham?

ATHURIEL.

Yes, Abraham. My prisoner is his child.

HAGAR.

Athuriel, forsake the sword.

ATHURIEL.

Too late.

My clans hang on the cliff, an avalanche
Of fire, to fall as flame from heaven upon
The foe. My enemy and yours, must taste
The bitter cup, that he has held so long
Unto our lips, and feel the poverty
Of power, when sore bereft.

HAGAR.

And if you come
Not back, I am bereft indeed.

ATHURIEL.

'Gainst tears

I've steeled my heart. My ears are deaf, my face
Is set against the foe! Good-bye, good-bye!

(*He embraces her.*)

ACT III.

SCENE II.—OG, BASIL and SOLDIER.

OG.

Come, let us have some wine before we work;
Mirth loosens up the joints and wine makes
glad

The heart of man.

BASIL.

I'll drink when I have done
My work.

OG.

Ha! ha! Enliven your dull wits
With wine. Elixir of the gods!

SOLDIER.

Here, drain
My flask.

OG.

Right royally the purple flood
Shall gurgle down my throat. (*He drinks.*)
That was a drop
Of exquisite delight!

BASIL.

Fie on the man
Who robs himself of wit with wine.

OG.

Drink deep,
'Twill drive the sternness from your heart.

BASIL.

And leave
A bitter taste.

OG.

Taste, is a thing of taste.
Some like the leek and garlic, some the wine
That's weak and lately ravished from the vine;
But when it sparkles in the cup, and moves
Aright, 'tis fit for men and gods!

BASIL.

A fiend
That steals our souls.

OG.

What's in your flask?

BASIL.

Just taste.

(*He offers OG the bottle. He takes a drink and spits it out.*)

Og.

Bah, water!

SOLDIER.

Shall I get more wine?

Og.

No, no!

Now that reminds me of a tale.

SOLDIER.

Of wine?

Og.

No, water.

SOLDIER.

Let us have it, then.

Og.

It is

The wettest tale ever was writ. In fact
The parchment sweats.

BASIL.

Ha! give it us.

Og.

Hast heard

Of Noah?

L. of C.:

SOLDIER.

No.

OG.

Of Jasher?

BASIL.

No.

OG.

Well, well.

Have never heard of Jasher? Can you read?

SOLDIER.

Why should I read?

OG.

Or think?

SOLDIER.

Or think?

OG.

I give

It up.

SOLDIER.

The Tale!

OG.

In Jasher it is writ,—

Now to the nub of this affair. 'Tis war,
And we must know the number of the enemy.

BASIL.

He will not fight. He loves his flocks and gold
Too well.

Og.

I tell you he must fight.

SOLDIER.

He'll pawn
His gold for Isaac. We can name our terms
And strip him of the heritage.

Og.

'Tis war!

Athuriel will scorn to touch his gold,
But yearns to humble his proud enemy.
Three passions rule the heart, and these are love,
And lust, and fear. The first lifts men to gods,
The second drags them down to earth; the last
Makes liars of them all and fills with dread
The future state. The priestly function is
To work on this and now he sounds the trump
Of war in Abram's ear, to fire his blood,
Grown chill with age.

SOLDIER.

Let me spy out his camp.

Og.

Unfold your plans.

SOLDIER.

I'd wait till fall of night,
 Then slip between the sentinels and count
 Their sleeping tents, and horse, and spears.

OG.

And then?

SOLDIER.

Steal back.

OG.

So, so! And you!

BASIL.

I'd be a priest.

And play upon his heart till it gave out
 Its secrets unto me.

SOLDIER.

This is not war,

'Tis treachery.

OG.

War is the game of kings
 Whereby they decimate the rank and file
 To keep them from their craven throats. Think
 you

When men are to be slain they hesitate
Upon the manner of their taking off?
Basil, the priest! We'll speed you on your way.

(*Exit OG, BASIL and SOLDIER.*)

ACT III.

SCENE III.—ABRAHAM'S *Tent.*

ABRAHAM.

The season wanes. The hungry desert yields
No life. Across its shifting sands I've looked
With fading eyes in vain. No caravan
Appears. My scouts return with silent tongues.
Sarah is dead and Isaac comes not back.
Evil bestrides the hour, has stripped mine age
And left me comfortless. Alas, alas!
It cannot be that I have trusted, lo,
These many years, and walked by faith, to be
Deceived at last? What doth the Lord require?
My life? Most gladly would I lay it down,
A ransom for my son. (*He turns to attendants.*)
Ho, mount the swiftest steeds, scour wood and
plain;
Envisage all these hills, send coursers back;
Come with the son, or not at all! (*Enter AB-*
NER in disguise.)

ABNER.

Hail, Sheik!

ABRAHAM.

Who are you?

ABNER.

Words must answer for my face.

ABRAHAM.

Speak, I command! (*He approaches ABNER.*)

ABNER.

Your son—

ABRAHAM.

Not dead?

ABNER.

Not dead.

ABRAHAM.

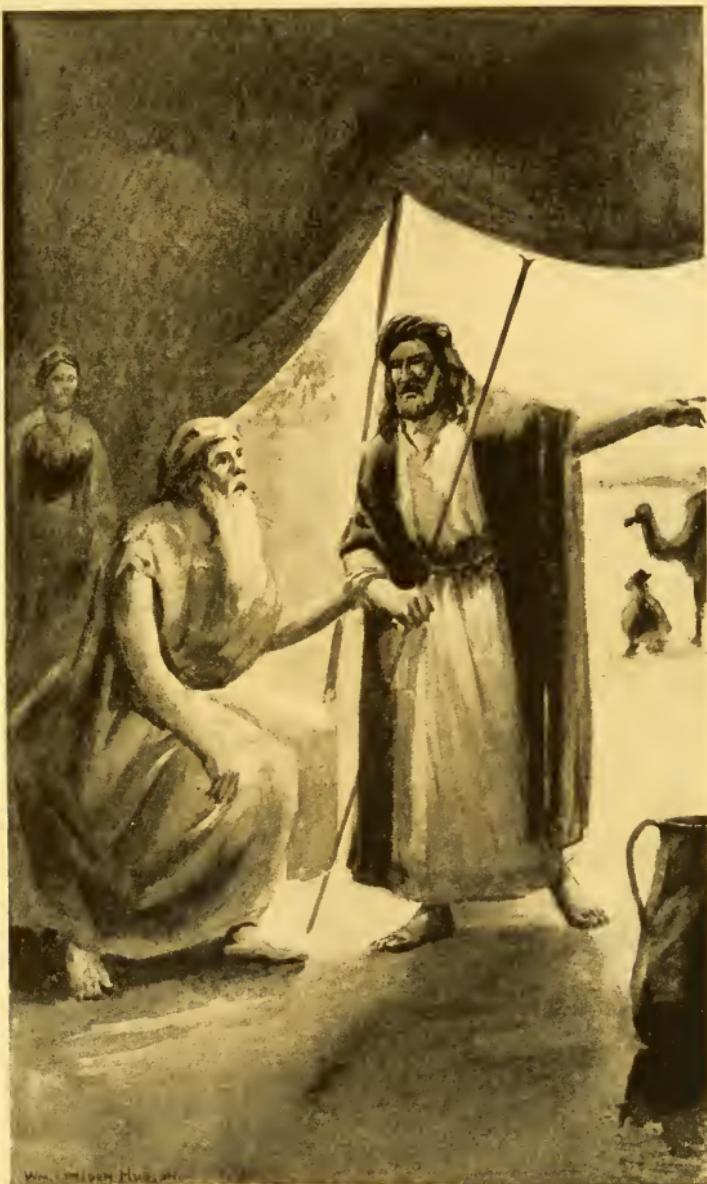
Where is he now?

ABNER.

A captive doomed to die.

ABRAHAM.

A captive doomed to die? Who dare invoke
The anger of a jealous God? Incur
My wrath?



ABRAHAM.
Speak, I command!

ABNER.

Athuriel.

ABRAHAM.

Athuriel?

(He seizes ABNER by the arm.)

Speak truth, or by the God I serve, the dogs
Shall crunch your bones.

ABNER.

Ha, time will prove the truth
Of all I say.

ABRAHAM.

Ho, guards, attend!

ABNER.

Wait till
I'm done. The caravan returning camped
Last night hard by the spring, but while they
slept,
The bandits fell and swept them all away.

ABRAHAM.

At last the Lord hath measured out my woe
With plenteous hand. In sack-cloth will I wait
Till He shall call me hence. (Enter PRIEST.)

PRIEST.

What meaneth this?

ABRAHAM.

Be still before the Lord. In mine old age
He blessed me with a son, but now, like Job,
In mine infirmity I'm stripped.

PRIEST

Your flocks

Are here.

ABRAHAM.

Isaac, the promised one, is held
A prisoner by Athuriel and doomed
To die.

PRIEST.

Now will the Lord of hosts avenge
Thee on thy enemy. With fire and sword
Surround and sweep these hostile hills. Leave
naught

That lives and thus the Lord will be avenged.
Forget the chill of age in fires of faith.
The Lord displays His signal in the heavens,
Calls you to arms! Gird every man his sword.
Summon the neighb'ring kings, say "Abraham
Makes war upon Athuriel! The Lord
Will give him to my hand and all the land
Have rest."

ABRAHAM (*To attendants*).

Hear the ambassador of God!
Arouse the hosts that wait upon the plain!

(*The attendants hastily depart.*)

PRIEST.

The sun shall stay his course to look upon
This field. (*Enter BASIL disguised as a priest.*)

PRIEST.

What brings you here?

BASIL.

I come with prayers
For peace.

PRIEST.

'Tis war!

ABRAHAM.

Athuriel holds my son!

BASIL.

Yet peace with gentler fingers may restore
This rent and leave the garment whole.

PRIEST.

The Lord
Heareth the heathen rage. He bends His bow ;
His arrows fly till all His enemies
Consume away.

ABRAHAM.

Know you the promise made ?
God will avenge my son.

BASIL.

You still may treat
For him.

PRIEST.

Nay, God forbid that we should treat
With him, reviler of the Lord.

BASIL.

The Lord
Will save His sacred name. Fan not the flame
Of war. Deal with Athuriel.

PRIEST.

I spurn
The traitor thought.

ABRAHAM.

Look you upon the plain,
Where gathering hosts wait my command.

BASIL.

Know you

The number of this host?

ABRAHAM.

Three thousand spears

Rest in the hand already nerved to fight.

BASIL.

Lend not your ear to counsellors of war. (*To
the PRIEST.*)

Stir not this strife.

PRIEST.

False servant of the Lord,

Avaunt!

BASIL.

Peace, like a homeless dove, can find
No place of rest on this wide world. Farewell.(BASIL withdraws. Enter RHODA, *wife of one
of ABRAHAM'S captains.*)

RHODA.

Take not my baby's father to this war.

He's all we have. If he be slain—

PRIEST.

Come not
 At time like this to intercede for him.
 Rider and horse are eager for the fray.
 The trumpets and the rolling drums arouse
 The warrior's blood.

RHODA.

Why should this blood be shed?

ABRAHAM.

My son is prisoner kept; my power defied.

RHODA.

This is no cause of mine. Why should I give
 The jewels of my heart to ransom yours?

PRIEST.

All must uphold the throne, for it protects
 You all. Unquestion every act; submit,
 And yield a cheerful sacrifice.

RHODA.

Last night

The baby missed his father's good-night kiss;
 This morn he looked for him with eager eyes,
 Refused his little meal and cried.

Let him
Come home with me. (*The soldiers cry, "Let
him go home."*)

PRIEST.

Stifle your sobs! 'Tis treason! All their hearts
Are stirred: tears will unman their breasts, usurp
The sword, out-root the throne!

RHODA.

If thrones must thrive
On tears, 'twere better they were overthrown.

PRIEST.

Tear her away!

CAPTAIN.

Let me but kiss away
Her tears.

ABRAHAM.

Your place is in the ranks
To-day! (*The soldiers strip off his insignia of
rank.*)

(Back curtain drops.)

ACT III.

SCENE IV.

(Enter SOLDIERS, singing.)

*Most gloriously to battle goes the King of Kings,
The heavens are rent asunder, while the earth
in tremor swings.*

*The mountains smoke before Him and the moon
grows dark with blood;
And the angry seas are lifted in a great and swell-
ing flood.*

*The heathen are as stubble when His anger
waxeth hot,
He turns His face upon them, lo, behold, and
they are not!
The smoke of burning cities and of ramparts
overthrown,
Is incense to His nostrils when the Lord fights
for His own.*

(Exit all but ABNER.)

ABNER.

'Twere better I had offered up my child
To Moloch. Priest of Abraham! A tool,
A traitor, hatching cockatrice's eggs!

He robbed me of her dower. If he escape
The sword, my hand shall seek his life!

(*Exit ABNER.*)

ACT III.

SCENE V.—ATHURIEL'S *Camp.* HAGAR, *maids and Attendants.*

HAGAR.

How dreadful this suspense! Each trembling leaf

Seems charged with messages of ill. The birds Sit mute upon the boughs which droop with grief.

O, man that slayest fellow man for lust!

The beast when gorged turns from its prey, but thou,

Image of the Divine, canst never slake

Thy thirst although the earth is drenched with blood.

(*Enter MESSENGER.*)

MESSENGER.

The battle's on! 'Tis foot to foot and hand To hand!

Hagar.

HAGAR.

Athuriel?

MESSENGER.

He leads the fight,
And o'er th' onrushing ranks his white plume
waves
As foam crests the wind-lifted sea. (*Exit MES-
SENGER.*)

HAGAR.

Oh, God,
Return him safe to me! (*Enter another MES-
SENGER.*)

MESSENGER.

The foe like a
Returning sea, dash wildly on our ranks,
Leaving a trail of bloody surf.

HAGAR.

Woe, woe!
O'ershadows all the land! (*She summons her
maids.*)

Haste to the tents!
Bring cordials and soft bands. (*Enter MES-
SENGER.*)

MESSENGER.

Flee! flee unto a safer place! Our ranks
Are torn; retreat, but turn with fierce recoil
Upon the enemy.

HAGAR.

I will not flee!

Say to Athuriel that I will come!
Away! (*Exit MESSENGER.*)

HAGAR. (*To attendants.*)

(*Attendants come forward.*)

Go, fetch my steed and I will ride
To war. Keep Ishmael within the hills! (*Enter
Og.*)

Why come you here unarmed?

Og.

I'm from the field,
Where the red tongue of war licks up the men
Like ants, and where the fight was hottest, there
I wrought. I climbed upon the pile of slain
To view the field and single out the foe
Most worthy of my arm, and down I bore,
E'en as the eagle swoops upon its prey.
A hush fell on the field; all eyes were set
On us. The scintillations from our blades
Lit up the gloom. The action was so hot,

That my good sword was melted inch by inch;
 At last the hilt was left, I sprang at him
 And crushed him to the earth, but as I raised
 My hand to take his life, he cried, "Spare me!"
 A brave heart never slays a fallen foe.
 I passed my hilt to him, but lo! his was
 Consumed.

HAGAR.

Knave, leave my sight! (*Enter MESSENGER.*)
 What word?

MESSENGER.

The foe pursuing reached the deep defile,
 When suddenly from either side there fell
 Our phalanx on the enemy and swept
 Them as dead leaves when Autumn winds hold
 sway.

"A glorious sight," Athuriel bid me say. (*Enter MESSENGER.*)

MESSENGER.

The fight is won, the route complete! Captives
 In chains will pass this way.

HAGAR.

Turn them aside,
 But such as need our mercy, bring them here.

(*Enter ATHURIEL.*)

ATHURIEL.

Hail, Hagar, Queen!

HAGAR.

Athuriel! Thank God for your return! (*She unfastens his helmet.*)

This blood!

ATHURIEL.

'Tis of an enemy.

HAGAR.

Have you
No wounds?

ATHURIEL.

No, danger passed me by.

HAGAR.

Give me
Your sword.

ATHURIEL.

My sign of manhood?

HAGAR.

Yes,

ATHURIEL.

And let
It rust in peace?

HAGAR.

In peace.

ATHURIEL.

So be it, then.

(He hands her the sword, she takes it and looks at it and says.)

HAGAR.

When shall you leap as lightning from your sheath?

ATHURIEL.

Never, till drawn from thence by your fair hand.

HAGAR.

Then rest, good blade, and rust; your work is done.

(Enter PRIEST and CAPTAIN of ABRAHAM's forces.)

PRIEST.

Behold the messengers the Lord hath sent!
To intercede for Abraham.

ATHURIEL.

False priest,

A bootless task.

CAPTAIN.

Great Chief! Proud Abraham
Would sue for peace; crave mercy for his son;
Bestow rich gifts on you, yea, all he has.
Think of his years, his griefs; restore his son.

ATHURIEL.

Say to your master he must seek my face,
Alone, unshod. Bring in his hand no price.
This priest meanwhile shall hostage be.

(*Exit CAPTAIN. Enter detail, bringing wounded soldier.*)

HAGAR.

Bring him

To me.

WOUNDED SOLDIER.

Forgive if I have caused you pain,
But life would not find exit through these rents,
Till I had seen your face. One look assures,
And I can die in peace.

HAGAR.

The deepest wounds
Lie in the heart. Dismiss all fear. No harm
Shall come to yours. (*Enter MESSENGER.*)

MESSENGER.

Athuriel!

ATHURIEL.

Speak on.

MESSENGER.

Most potent chief! The kings upon the south
Revere your worth, admire your power, and seek
Alliance with your state.

ATHURIEL.

Whence this appeal

Unto my vanity?

MESSENGER.

Proud Abraham

Hath waxen great. The shadow of his branch
O'ershades the land. His roots drink up the
soil.

But now that he's abased, these kings would sign
To blot his spreading kingdom from the earth;
Win back the realm their fathers ruled and lost.

ATHURIEL.

Why should I seek alliance with your kings?

MESSENGER.

A federation buttressed thus in power,
May sweep this goodly land from sea to sea.

ATHURIEL.

You held aloof while fortune frowned, then turn
From him, weighted with years, dispirited
With grief, to me. Despoil his nakedness!
Rob, ravish, kill! but know, Athuriel
Will not make war upon the weak. The proud
Usurper feels his lance. The titled rogues
Who rest on beds of sloth, oppress the poor
And stronger forge their chains, may sleep in
fear,
And double all their guards at night, in vain.

MESSENGER.

The valleys where his flocks now graze, are rich
With herb and tender grass. These hills be-
grudge
A slender blade.

ATHURIEL.

I covet not his lands.

The greed that gathers riches, strips the man
Of all his nobler powers.

MESSENGER.

Yet, thrift is strong,
And sends its roots deep down into the soil.
He will recoup his power and all will fawn
On him.

ATHURIEL.

When eagles are besmeared with muck
 And seek the dung-hill for their prey.

MESSENGER.

His wings
 Once clipped, his flight is headlong to the earth.

ATHURIEL.

An eagle still! (*Enter soldier of ATHURIEL.*)

SOLDIER.

He waits.

ATHURIEL.

Bring him within.

(*Enter ABRAHAM, unshod and uncovered.*)

'ABRAHAM.

I rest upon your word; give me my son.

ATHURIEL.

Think you he lives?

'ABRAHAM.

I do.



CHARLES W. HODGES.

ABRAHAM.

A brave man never wrongs the innocent.
With empty hands and yearning heart I come.

ATHURIEL.

Why hold that hope?

ABRAHAM.

A brave man never wrongs the innocent.
With empty hands and yearning heart I come.
If ransom you require, all that I have
Is thine. Give me, I pray, my living son.

ATHURIEL.

This thing concerns me not. Deal with the
Queen.

ABRAHAM.

The Queen! Then prospered be my quest!

(*When he turns to HAGAR she is sitting with
ISHMAEL standing beside her; she signals
for ISAAC. He is brought in and stands be-
hind ABRAHAM, unobserved by him.*)

ABRAHAM.

Oh, Queen!

I pray the sorrows of a poor old man
May touch the tendrils of a mother's heart,
That twine so lovingly around your son,
And wring from their chaste lips, sweet sym-
pathy

That makes the whole race kin. Let me draw near,
 For my dim eyes would read in your fair face,
 Mercy and hope. (*He steps forward and peers
 in her face, turns and exclaims.*) 'Tis Ha-
 gar! I am lost!

HAGAR.

Behold your son!

ABRAHAM.

(*He embraces ISAAC, and turns to HAGAR.*)

Hagar! Can you forgive
 A broken and a contrite man?

HAGAR.

Yes, go!

Not as a wanderer unto the waste,
 Naked and scourged by evil tongues of hate,
 But to your home in peace.

(*Enter ABNER in a frenzy.*)

ABNER.

I'll be avenged

Upon my enemy!

HAGAR.

It is enough.

Forgive and be forgiven.



Wm. LINCOLN HUDDUM

ABNER.

Forgive? Aye, when
The gods forget and ask forgiveness! Revenge!

ABNER.

Forgive? Aye, when
The gods forget and ask forgiveness! Revenge!
(*He turns and looks around and sees that*
ATHURIEL is unarmed, and attacks him.

HAGAR rushes between them and flashes the
sword, from its sheath and hands the sword
to ATHURIEL. ABNER and ATHURIEL fight
and ATHURIEL by a dextrous movement
wrests ABNER's sword from his hand and
commands him to yield or die. HAGAR holds
aloft the scabbard between them, and the
curtain falls.)

FINIS.



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